This course introduces students to public policy and the policy process in the United States and in comparative context. In it, we focus on important theories of how policymaking works from pressures on legislators to make policy, adapt policy, implement it, and the effect it has on citizens’ individual lives. We take a broad overview of the classics as well as look at new directions in contemporary policy research. This course is recommended for students who are interested American or comparative politics broadly or policy students looking for theoretical background.

**TEXTS**
The books listed below are available for purchase at Mary Jane books or at online retailers such as Amazon.com. In addition, articles assigned will be available on eres through blackboard.


**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

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<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Response Papers</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Paper (Literature Review)</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (Including reading questions and policy presentation)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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**Response Papers:** During the course of the semester you are required to write four response papers. These papers integrate the readings for the week and provide your own thoughtful evaluation and criticism. **Papers should be between three and four pages.** You may choose whatever weeks you wish to write your papers but you must turn in your paper at the beginning of class on the material that we are discussing for that class. You may only turn in one paper per week.

**Literature Review:** A literature review is due at our last class meeting. More specific instructions on how to write and structure a literature review will be handed out in class.

**Class Participation:** There are three components to your class participation grade. First, you must submit two discussion questions to me via e-mail ([pstrach@albany.edu](mailto:pstrach@albany.edu)) by midnight on Wednesday before our Thursday class. The questions should be interesting and engaging questions that you would feel comfortable leading class discussion. Second, you will each sign up for a policy presentation. In
these, you will do a brief background on the policy area hitting some of the major works and key issues. 
**Policy presentations should be no more than 15 minutes.**

Because this is a small class, we will have an active discussion about the ideas and arguments in the reading. Your participation (and even excitement) is essential. You are expected to come to class ready to engage the reading and your fellow classmates. **The date next to the readings indicates when they should be completed. You should read the assigned readings for class on that day.**

I. Introduction
August 29: Class Suspended (APSA)

September 5: Classes Suspended

September 12: What is Public Policy? How Do We Study It?


Peter A. Hall. 2003. “Aligning Ontology and Methodology in Comparative Politics.’ In James Mahoney and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Comparative Historical Analysis in the Social Sciences.* Cambridge University Press. (eres)
**Policy Presentation: Environment**

II. Constructing Public Policy and the Policy Agenda
September 19: Framing


**Policy Presentation: Pensions and Retirement**

September 26: Agenda Setting I


**Policy Presentation: Education**

October 3: Agenda Setting II


**Policy Presentation: Energy**

October 10: Policy Design and Creation


**Policy Presentation: Science and Technology**

October 17: Solutions

**Policy Presentation: Foreign Affairs**

III. Change

October 24: Path Dependence and Policy Feedback

**Policy Presentation: Health**

October 31: Policy Diffusion

**Policy Presentation: Tax**

Recommended

November 7: Inequality and Citizenship

**Policy Presentation: Welfare**

Recommended:

IV. New Directions in Policy Research

November 14: TBD

November 21: Foreign Debt
Zsofia Barta. 2013. "Facing up to public debt - a society-centered approach to the question of fiscal stabilization."

November 28: CLASSES SUSPENDED

December 5: Navigating Ethical Dilemmas
PS Symposium: “‘Pracademics’: Mixing an Academic Career with Practical Politics.” PS 44:2. (eres)

December 10: Final Papers Due